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ABSTRACT

Many speakers of Modern Greek have an exaggerated notion of the superiority of their language vis-a-vis Turkish and the languages of Southeastern Europe. It would therefore come as a surprise to some Greeks that Modern Greek lexical elements in Romanian have undergone a substantial stylistic demotion during the past century or so. In this paper only those words which entered Romanian during the Phanoriot Era, i.e., between 1711 and 1821, are considered. These "Phanariotisms" underwent stylistic markings which changed the original meanings of the loanwords. They are found only in spoken Romanian, or in a written style which purports to imitate the spoken style. Greek models of some Phanariotisms are stylistically marked in Greek as they are in Romanian. It is further suggested that certain unmarked Phanariotistic suffixes are so because they underwent stylistic change in Greek before being incorporated into Romanian. (Author/AM)

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"Some remarks on the stylistic status of Modern Greek lexical elements in Rumanian"

by

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Modern Greek loanwords in Rumanian come in several chronological layers. Here we'll consider only those words which entered Rumanian during the Phanariot Era, that is between 1711 and 1821. To refer to such loanwords, we'll use the term "Phanariotism."

Unlike some earlier Greek loanwords, no Phanariotism ever made its way into what Rumanian linguists call fondul principal lexical ('the principal lexical stock') of the Rumanian language. Although there were literally hundreds of Phanariotisms, the great majority of them turned out to be ephemeral, so that there are relatively few of them still left in contemporary Rumanian. And many of those which do survive to this day can hardly be called pan-Rumanian, since they are typically limited to Wallachian and Moldavian urban speech. There are of course exceptions to this: for instance, the word fundă 'bow-knot' is well-known throughout Rumania.

The rapidity with which Phanariotisms dropped out of the Rumanian language was great, but not surprising. There were several factors conspiring against their retention in the language. One such factor was that most Phanariotism had affected primarily the speech of boyars and social upstarts. Another factor was the resentment which Rumanians felt against the period of Turco-Greek hegemony. Phanariotisms were sometimes referred to in the nineteenth century as "detested" or "degenerate Greek words"--cr., for instance, Bulgar 1966, p. 86. One stumbles constantly upon the compound adjectives greco-turcesc and turco-grecesc in Rumanian writings dealing with most of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. Incidentally,

such a compound comes as somewhat of a shock to Greeks, for whom Greek is to Turkish as day is to night. Be that as it may, representatives of other South East European nationalities do not always distinguish two sharply between the two, to the Greeks' chagrin and dismay.

The elimination of Phanariotisms was naturally also speeded up by the new orientation of Rumanian society, after 1821, primarily towards Western Europe, although sometimes through a Russian intermediary. This orientation resulted in a huge influx of neologisms, mostly from French (often through Russian) and from Italian.

We'll turn now to the few Phanariotisms which did survive. As László Gáldi has remarked (1939), most of the surviving Phanariotisms entered Rumanianthrough spoken, rather than written, Greek. Among them, there are some words which, to the best of my knowledge, are stylistically neutral--or unmarked. Such are, for instance, the nouns fundă 'bow-knot' and plic 'envelope', and the verb gargarisi 'to gargle'. Other surviving Phanariotisms, however, perhaps the majority, have been stylistically demoted and have gradually acquired a pejorative, or humorous, or ironic connotation. Take for instance logos,which today is ironic for 'speech' or 'moral lecture'. In Greek, is a stylistically unmarked word meaning 'speech'. Now, of course, even Greeks can use ironically, as when someone says ;
'Did you come here to give me a speech?' or 'Did you come here to give me a moral lecture?' In this sense, clearly just about any word can be used ironically. For instance, there is nothing to stop one from using a stylistically unmarked Rumanian word like portavion 'aircraft-carrier'

in the following context: Iată-l şi pe Ionică cu portavionul său ('Here come I. with his aircraft-carrier'), when in fact Ionică only owns a diminutive row-boat, on which even a term like barcă ('row-boat') would be wasted. Another example is lefter, which today means 'penniless, broke', whereas in Greek the meaning of is 'free' or 'unmarried'.

And let's not forget the Greek suffixes, and particularly the verbal suffix -isi, often compounded with a preceding -ar- (of Italian origin in Greek) to make up the suffix -arisi. Certainly -arisi, and perhaps even simple -isi, seem to be still productive in contemporary Rumanian, but they invariably lend ironic overtones to any new fomations, as we can readily see from examples like subvenţionarisi (for subvenţiona 'to subsidize') and handicaparisi (for handicapa 'to handicap'). In this they resemble very closely the present-day use of the originally Turkish suffix -giu. Even though a number of Rumanian writers have said that -giu is no longer productive, we still encounter here and there an occasional new formation with that suffix. As Bahner (1958) has shown, -giu is still productive, but only with a pejorative, or humorous, or ironic overtone. In other words, if a cosmopolitan Rumanian were to use a word like compiutergiu, we would immediately read into it more than its intended denotational meaning, namely 'computerologist'; we would also take it to indicate that the person who used it wanted to be facetious--or something like that. On the other hand, it is perfectly true that the suffix -giu is no longer productive in its former, stylistically neutral meaning, namely the meaning it has in words like geamgiu 'glazier' and bostangiu 'kitchen-gardener (one who sells melons, pumpkins, etc.); melon grower'. The same can be

said of the suffixes -isi and -arisi. Nobody cracks a smile when they are used in words like aerisi 'to air, ventilate', gargarisi 'to gargle', or plictisi 'to bore, bother, pester', but latter-day formations like scuzarisi (for scuza 'to excuse, pardon')and regularisi (for regula 'to regulate') are at least mildly facetious.

Thus the fate of Phanariotisms (and Turkisms) in Rumanian corresponds very closely to the fate of Turkisms in all Balkan languages.

We said earlier that most of the surviving Phanariotisms entered Rumanian through an oral, rather than a written channel. Not surprisingly, we still find them today almost exclusively in spoken Rumanian, or in written styles purporting to imitate the spoken language. Take for example words like anapoda 'wrong side out, upside down', mutră '(ugly) mug', ipochimen, which is ironic for 'person, individual', tiflă 'the gesture of thumbing one's nose'. We are much more likely to hear such words in everyday speech than to read them, say, in expository prose. This oral nature of surviving Phanariotisms is probably largely responsible for their very survival. The men who tried to purify the Rumanian language from its Hellenisms and Turkisms were bound to be more successful in expurgating the written language than in ridding the spoken language of its Greco-Turkisms. Everyday speech is certainly more spontaneous than any written style, so that someone who might write plin de haz, spiritual, original, interesant, atrăgător, plăcut, depending on what he wants to say, may still use the Phanariotism nostim in spontaneous discourse.

Those who have dealt with the Greco-Turkish lexical legacy of the Phanariot Era have often remarked that Hellenisms refer typically to abstract

notions, whereas Turkisms in their great majority refer to concrete objects--cf. Gáldi, 1939, p. 65. This is not too surprising, since in eighteenth-century Greek itself a great many terms referring to material culture were borrowings from Turkish. It is nevertheless true that quite a few Turkish words referring to abstract notions did enter Rumanian during the Phanariot Era, albeit superficially, but they did so through a Greek intermediary, which of course makes them Greek loanwords, strictly speaking. Such words are, for instance, the verbs buiurdisi 'to order, command (ultimately from Turkish buyurmak through Greek) and beendisi 'to approve' (from Turkish begenmek through Greek or).

When we said that even a term like portavion can be used in a stylistically marked fashion, we were stating a truism, namely that most lexical items are potentially stylistically vulnerable. All we need is the right set of extralinguistic circumstances, plus a speaker or a writer who is sufficiently witty--or sufficiently obnoxious. This stylistic vulnerability is present in both concrete and abstract words. It is often limited to individual and sporadic instances, where a given word is stylistically demoted, as it were. But all too often such demotions extend beyond the more idiosyncratic domain of parole and affect the langue itself, the language of the community. Alexandru Graur (1967, p. 56) says the following about the fate of some older words in Rumanian referring to concrete objects: "At a certain moment it became difficult to sell a merchandise under its old name, which had begun to characterize rustic varieties or junk, whereas under their French name the same commodities

could be sold at a higher price."

I suspect, however, that abstract terms, and especially terms referring to notions which are traditionally regarded as being somehow elevated, are particularly vulnerable to stylistic demotion. In cases of massive vocabulary replacement, such as that which took place in Rumanian during the nineteenth century, such words often take a particularly severe beatings. The process of stylistic demotion in such cases can assume the character of a chain reaction phenomenon. A neologism is introduced. It gradually replaces an older word in modern, or "forward-looking," expository prose. The older term thereby acquires a stylistic label "traditional" or "old-fashioned," which in time may become "old-fashioned spoken." At a given point the discrepancy between its no-longer neutral stylistic status and its elevated semantic content becomes glaring, and the older word is open to all sorts of negative connotations. That certainly happened to a great number of Turkisms and Phanariotisms in Rumanian.

All the same, it is equally true that the Greek models of some extent Phanariotisms are every bit as stylisticaly marked in Greek as they are in Rumanian. An example is the word ifos, which in Rumanian means 'airs, haughtiness, self-importance'. The Greek noun has all of these meanings, in addition to its more primary meanings 'style; air, tone'. The same is true of mutră, which in Rumanian means '(ugly) mug, snout' --something like gueule in French, when applied to human beings. The Greek word has exactly the same meaning, except that in some idiomatic expressions it means 'long face': so, for instance,

means 'to make a long face, sulk', whereas the Rumanian expression a face mutre means 'to be fastidious, to be hard to please'. We have a similar situation in the case of ipochimen, which as we saw earlier is ironic for 'person' or 'individual'. Its Greek model, , has both a stylistically unmarked meaning, namely 'grammatical subject', as well as a stylistically marked one, which is pejorative for 'person, individual' and thus very similar to the current meaning of ipochimen in Rumanian. In Greek, is often accompanied by adjectives denoting negative attributes, such as 'vile' or 'ridiculous'. It would be interesting to know a bit more about the stylistic import of such terms as , , and in eighteenth-century Greek. It may well be that such words had already a low stylistic status when they entered Rumanian, and thus did not undergo stylistic demotion in that language, since that process had already taken place in Greek itself. This is apparently also the case with some Balkan Turkisms. A number of Turkisms which today have a low stylistic status in the Balkan languages, reportedly have a similar status in Turkish itself. Whether this is due to an independent development, or whether the Turkisms in question already had negative connotations when they were borrowed in the Balkans is a question which I am not competent even to attempt to answer.

Efharistisesc pentru prosohie.

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